Choose two poems to complete of the four assignments.

**Assignment One**

Choose one of the poems below and write a reply to that poem, answer the poem as if you are a character within the poem or merely an observer, or write a poem on the same theme. Write down the name of your poem you chose, followed by your poem (minimum of 10 lines.)

**Poem 1**

THE POOL PLAYERS.

SEVEN AT THE GOLDEN SHOVEL.

By Gwendolen Brooks

We real cool. We

Left school. We

Lurk late. We

Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We

Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We

Die soon.

**Poem 2**

**Theme For English B**

**by Langston Hughes**

The instructor said,

Go home and write

a page tonight.

And let that page come out of you--

Then, it will be true.

I wonder if it's that simple?

I am twenty-two, colored, born in Winston-Salem.

I went to school there, then Durham, then here

to this college on the hill above Harlem.

I am the only colored student in my class.

The steps from the hill lead down into Harlem,

through a park, then I cross St. Nicholas,

Eighth Avenue, Seventh, and I come to the Y,

the Harlem Branch Y, where I take the elevator

up to my room, sit down, and write this page:

It's not easy to know what is true for you or me

at twenty-two, my age. But I guess I'm what

I feel and see and hear, Harlem, I hear you:

hear you, hear me--we two--you, me, talk on this page.

(I hear New York, too.) Me--who?

Well, I like to eat, sleep, drink, and be in love.

I like to work, read, learn, and understand life.

I like a pipe for a Christmas present,

or records--Bessie, bop, or Bach.

I guess being colored doesn't make me not like

the same things other folks like who are other races.

So will my page be colored that I write?

Being me, it will not be white.

But it will be

a part of you, instructor.

You are white--

yet a part of me, as I am a part of you.

That's American.

Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.

Nor do I often want to be a part of you.

But we are, that's true!

As I learn from you,

I guess you learn from me--

although you're older--and white--

and somewhat more free.

This is my page for English B.

**Poem 3**

**Still I Rise**

BY [MAYA ANGELOU](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/maya-angelou)

You may write me down in history

With your bitter, twisted lies,

You may trod me in the very dirt

But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?

Why are you beset with gloom?

’Cause I walk like I've got oil wells

Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,

With the certainty of tides,

Just like hopes springing high,

Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?

Bowed head and lowered eyes?

Shoulders falling down like teardrops,

Weakened by my soulful cries?

Does my haughtiness offend you?

Don't you take it awful hard

’Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines

Diggin’ in my own backyard.

You may shoot me with your words,

You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,

But still, like air, I’ll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?

Does it come as a surprise

That I dance like I've got diamonds

At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history’s shame

I rise

Up from a past that’s rooted in pain

I rise

I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,

Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear

I rise

Into a daybreak that’s wondrously clear

I rise

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

I rise.

Example:

**Not Waving But Drowning**

By Stevie Smith

Nobody heard him, the dead man,

But still he lay moaning:

I was much further out than you thought

And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he always loved larking

And now he’s dead

It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,

They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always

(Still the dead one lay moaning)

I was much too far out all my life

And not waving but drowning.

Response poem written by one of my students to “Not Waving But Drowning”

I’ve always been a funny guy  
The one to make you laugh

Making everyone feel so high

But nobody ever did the math

Everyone thinks I am so fun

I feel like such a fool

Telling a joke or silly pun

But at least they think I’m cool

I can’t handle it anymore

People think I ‘m alright

My heart has grown ever so sore

Is there any end in sight?

Nobody sees the true me

Can’t I be who I want?

I feel like I’m lost at sea

And all the memories are there to taunt.

So no, not everything is well

Inside I’m not the person I want to be

The life I’m living isn’t so swell

I’m drowning—is it too late for me?

**Assignment Two**

Use your senses! Think of something with a distinctive scent, feel, taste, sound or sight and write a poem about it. (12 lines or more)

Student example:

Untitled

Sitting there all sexy like

Condensation dripping down slowly

The smelll of sweet sugar lingering in the air

I’m getting high off its aroma

Do I move in for the kill?

Or do I let the excitement keep building

The temptation is unbearable

The pretty green can glistening in the sun

The shade of yellow blurring part of it

I want so bad to hold it in my strong arms

Veins popping out, withdrawing

From lack of caffeine

I touch it to my lips

And all the feelings are

Well, gone

(About Sundrop)

**Assignment Three**

Come up with ten words that describe a feeling you have experienced. Write a poem using those descriptive words. (12 lines or more)

Example:

Fear

Hair-raising

Darkness

Black

Heart-pounding

Alone

Rapping

Steely

Terror

Breath-taking

**Fear**

Babysitting in the silence of the night  
Winter

Alone

I hear a rapping at the patio door

The night enveloped in darkness

Black

All around

Fear  
The sounds of someone rattling the door  
Trying to get in  
Heart pounding  
Terror  
I grab a steely butcher knife  
And head toward the door  
Protect the children  
Protect the children  
In terror I throw back the curtain   
Swing the knife overhead

And laugh

At the plastic covered patio door  
Flapping in the night wind

**Assignment Four**

Your choice of a poem (12 lines or more)